

Terminally ill 'death with dignity' advocate dies

November 3 2014, by Steven Dubois



This undated file photo provided by the Maynard family shows Brittany Maynard, a 29-year-old terminally ill woman who plans to take her own life under Oregon's death with dignity law. A spokesman for a terminally ill Oregon woman says she has taken lethal medication prescribed by a doctor and died. Sean Crowley, spokesman from the group Compassion & Choices, said late Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014, that Brittany Maynard was surrounded by family Saturday

when she took the medication. She was weeks shy of her 30th birthday. (AP Photo/Maynard Family, File)

A terminally ill woman who renewed a nationwide debate about physician-assisted suicide has ended her life with the lethal drugs available under Oregon's Death With Dignity Law. Brittany Maynard was 29.

Maynard, who had [brain cancer](#), died peacefully in her bedroom Saturday "in the arms of her loved ones," said Sean Crowley, a spokesman for the advocacy group Compassion & Choices.

Weeks ago, Maynard had said she might use the lethal drugs Nov. 1, just a couple weeks short of her 30th birthday. Last week, she said she might delay that. But she went ahead with her original plan.

Crowley said Maynard "suffered increasingly frequent and longer seizures, severe head and neck pain, and stroke-like symptoms. As symptoms grew more severe, she chose to abbreviate the dying process by taking the aid-in-dying medication she had received months ago."

Before dying, Maynard tried to live life as fully as she could. She and her husband, Dan Diaz, took a trip to the Grand Canyon last month—fulfilling a wish on Maynard's "bucket list."

Maynard has been in the national spotlight for a month since publicizing that she and her husband had moved to Oregon from California so that she could take advantage of this state's Death With Dignity Law. The law allows terminally ill patients to end their lives with lethal drugs prescribed by a doctor.

The debate over [physician-assisted suicide](#) is not new, but Maynard's youth and vitality before she became ill brought the discussion to a younger generation.



This photo provided by Compassion & Choices shows Brittany Maynard. A spokesman for Maynard says she has taken lethal medication prescribed by a doctor and died. Sean Crowley with the group Compassion & Choices said late Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014, that Maynard was surrounded by family Saturday when she took the medication. She was weeks shy of her 30th birthday. (AP Photo/Compassion & Choices)

Working with Compassion & Choices, Maynard used her story to speak out for the right of terminally ill people like herself to end their lives on their own terms.

Maynard's choice to end her life has not been without controversy. Some religious groups and others opposed to physician-assisted suicide have voiced objections.

Janet Morana, executive director of the group Priests for Life, said in a statement after hearing of Maynard's death: "We are saddened by the fact that this young woman gave up hope, and now our concern is for other people with terminal illnesses who may contemplate following her example. Our prayer is that these people will find the courage to live every day to the fullest until God calls them home."

Maynard told The Associated Press last month that she and her husband and other relatives accepted her choice.

"I think in the beginning my family members wanted a miracle; they wanted a cure for my cancer," she said. "When we all sat down and looked at the facts, there isn't a single person that loves me that wishes me more pain and more suffering."

Oregon was the first U.S. state to make it legal for a doctor to prescribe a life-ending drug to a terminally ill patient of sound mind who makes the request. The patient must swallow the drug without help; it is illegal for a doctor to administer it.



In this Oct. 21, 2014, file photo provided by TheBrittanyFund.org, Brittany Maynard and her husband Dan Diaz pose at the Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona. A spokesman for a terminally ill Oregon woman says she has taken lethal medication prescribed by a doctor and died. Sean Crowley, spokesman from the group Compassion & Choices, said late Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014, that Brittany Maynard was surrounded by family Saturday when she took the medication. She was weeks shy of her 30th birthday. (AP Photo/TheBrittanyFund.org, File)

More than 750 people in Oregon used the law to die as of Dec. 31, 2013.

The median age of the deceased is 71. Only six were younger than 35.

The state does not track how many terminally ill people move to Oregon to die. A patient must prove to a doctor that they are living in Oregon.

Oregon voters approved the Death with Dignity Act in 1994, then reaffirmed it with 60 percent of the vote in 1997.

Four other states—Washington, Montana, Vermont and New Mexico—allow patients to seek aid in dying.

Maynard was diagnosed with brain cancer on New Year's Day of this year and was told she had six months to live.

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Citation: Terminally ill 'death with dignity' advocate dies (2014, November 3) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-11-terminally-ill-death-dignity-advocate.html>

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